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(BIOLOGICAL) WEAPONS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-seventh year

Letter dated 27 January 1992 from the Permanent Representative of Mozambique to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith, for your kind attention, the text of a communiqué released by my Government on 23 January 1992 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Chemical and bacteriological (biological) weapons", and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Pedro Comissario AFONSO
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative to the United Nations

ANNEX

Communiqué released by the Government of Mozambique
on 23 January 1992

Following a military operation carried out by Mozambican governmental forces on 16 January 1992 against a RENAMO stronghold in the region of Ngungue, Estompene, elevation 314, an area located 5 kilometres from the border with South Africa, our forces spotted a light aircraft overflying the area of operations.

At the same time, the Government forces also spotted what appeared to be a white Toyota land-cruiser pick-up truck approaching the area and withdrawing shortly afterwards. This was immediately followed by sounds of machine-gun fire accompanied by a huge explosion which released a thick smog covering the entire area occupied by governmental forces.

As a result, our forces started to develop strange reactions and abnormal sensations, namely, skin irritations, burning, deep thirst and weakness.

Subsequently, some soldiers died; others were rendered paralysed, mentally affected; and others lost their sight and hearing abilities.

Preliminary medical reports from the military hospital in Maputo, the capital city of Mozambique, suggest the possibility of chemical warfare intoxication and contamination.

At the invitation of the Mozambican authorities, a medical team from South Africa made up of military and civilian personnel was dispatched to Maputo, where it joined a national medical team in the collection of evidence from the victims and from the site of the incident, with a view to determining the exact nature of the explosion.

Some of the evidence collected was left with the South African team, while the other part remained with Mozambican authorities, for further studies and analysis by a third country or relevant institution for the determination of the facts.

The Government of Mozambique launches an urgent appeal to the international community for assistance in its efforts to determine the nature of the weapon involved, as well as the treatment of injured people in this grave incident.